

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03909 101614Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4853
WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3909

EXDIS

JERUSALEM FOR THE SECRETARY

WHITE HOUSE FOR DR. BRZEZKNSKI ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PGOV, PINT, LE, IS
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: (A) STATE 187248, (B) BEIRUT 3883

1. FOLLOWING IS COUNTRY TEAM ANALYSIS AS OF 1600 LOCAL TIME
OF MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON.

2. ONLY REPORT WE HAVE OF RECENT GROUND FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN
LEBANON IS STATEMENT BY BASHIR GEMAYEL TO POLOFF ON AUGUST 10
THAT ALMA ASH SHAAB WAS ATTACKED AUGUST 9 BY PALESTINIAN UNIT,
AND A PHALANGE OFFICER NAMED FARAH, TWO CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN
AND SEVEN PALESTINIANS WERE KILLED. (LEB ARMY G-2 HAS NO
KNOWLEDGE OF ANY OFFICER OF THIS NAME AND BASHIR GEMAYEL'S
CASUALTY REPORTS ARE NOTORIOUSLY INACCURATE.) BASHIR ALSO
INDICATED CHRISTIAN MILITIA FORCES STILL PLAN TO OCCUPY
NAQURA SOON. WE HAVE NO OTHER REPORTS OF ANY PALESTINIAN

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PRESSURE ON CHRISTIAN POSITIONS. ON CONTRARY, OUR
INFORMATION CONTINUES TO INDICATE THAT PALESTINIANS
HAVE BEEN PULLING OUT OF BINT JBAYL AND OTHER BORDER
AREAS AND MOVING TO REFUGEE CAMPS AROUND TYRE, TO AREA
NORTH OF NABATIYAH AND INTO THE ARQUB. ARTILLERY
EXCHANGES BETWEEN CHRISTIAN/ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN
STRONG POINTS ARE CONTINUING AT MORE OR LESS NORMAL

LEVEL; BOTH SIDES SEEM TO TAKE TURNS INITIATING THE FIRING.

3. AFTER THE BATTLE OF TAYYIBAH SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, PLO/FATAH AND REJECTIONIST FORCES COOPERATED IN DEFINING MILITARY DISTRICTS IN WHICH EACH WOULD OPERATE. WE HAVE NO REPEAT NO INDICATIONS, HOWEVER, OF ANY MILITARY BUILD-UP BY EITHER, SEPARATELY OR IN COOPERATION, DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS. ON CONTRARY, OUR INFORMATION INDICATES FATAH HAS FREQUENTLY ACTED TO RESTRAIN REJECTIONISTS IN RECENT WEEKS.

4. IN SUM, WE SEE NO REPEAT NO SIGNS THAT CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES IN SOUTHERN LEBANON ARE OR FEEL THREATENED AT THIS TIME. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT BASHIR GEMAYEL WOULD STILL BE TALKING OF AN OFFENSIVE OPERATION AGAINST NAQURA IF HE BELIEVE PALESTINIANS WERE ABOUT TO ATTACK CHRISTIAN POSITIONS. LE. ADNAN HOMSI, STAFF ASSISTANT TO THE COMMANDER OF CHRISTIAN FORCES IN SOUTH LEBANON, WAS IN BEIRUT AUGUST 10 AND TOLD DATT HE EXPECTED NO CHANGE IN PRESENT SITUATION. LEBANESE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAS NO INFORMATION ON ANY PENDING MILITARY OPERATIONS BY ANY GROUP.

5. COMMENT: PRESS AND RADIO REPORTS OF "FIERCE FIGHTING" IN SOUTHERN LEBANON DURING PAST FEW DAYS
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SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE. BECAUSE OF THE TREMENDOUS MEDIA ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE AREA, SUCH MILITARY ACTIONS AS ARTILLERY DUELS TEND TO GET BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION AND MAY BE PLAYED UP TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF CRISIS FOR POLITICAL REASONS.
PARKER

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